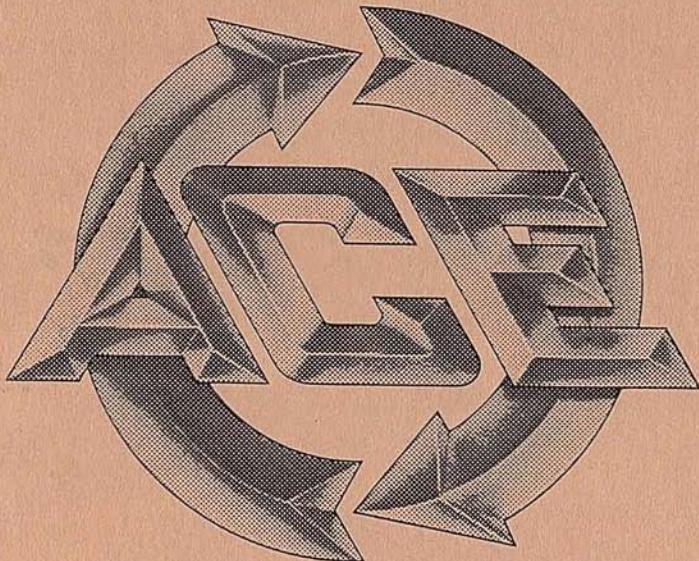


status

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 1987



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FROM THE EDITOR

This month the STATUS Newsletter was able to get an exclusive report from Kent Irwin on what is really going on in Sunnyvale. We have some articles of interest from our Newsletter Exchange retyped by the nimble fingered Dick Litchfield. We also are running an advertisement for Stardust Software's QuickCode, thanks to the efforts of Gene Rodriguez.

I must start off this month with an apology to Dave Levy. His fine article last month on programming included a listing of his program for changing pitch from Dos. The typesetter wrongly reversed the columns of the listing. As listed the program will not run. STATUS and the editor deeply apologise for any inconvenience this may have caused. We will be glad to forward a correct listing of the program to anyone who is interested and sends us a self addressed envelope.

Flash! No, its not some late breaking news bulletin, but a bolt of lightning. Users of the STATUS BBS may have found that they are unable to connect. This is due to the fact that the BBS took a hit during one of the recent thunder storms. Excessive voltage came in on, of all things, the phone line! About 75% of the BBS equipment was damaged. Who said that lightning never strikes twice in the same place? Let this serve as a warning to us all. Our weatherman, Duane Harding, tells us that lightning voltage has been measured at 100 million volts, and its capable of shooting a flash from 25,000 feet to earth. Can we really expect a surge

protector or a simple rocker switch to protect our computer? No way Jose! When not using your computer UNPLUGIT....and the phone line too!

Subscribers to Analog and STLog, be patient. Lee Pappas (the editor) told me that the delay is due having the magazine printed in Michigan now instead of Maine. All subscribers will have their subscriptions extended one month due to the combining of the July/August issue. The J/A STLog will be shipped this week and the September issue of both magazines will be shipped in about two weeks.

Several new programs for both computers have been released. Most noteworthy of the new releases are News Station, 8 and 16 bit, font disks and clip art for the ST's Publishing Partner, Quik Pix -8 bit (review in this issue) and new games for both computers. Broderbund has announced they are going to release Print Shop for the ST.

STATUS and PACE are working on several joint venture ideas. The most concrete of which will be two full club membership joint meetings, one in September and the other in December. The September meeting will be held at Soria Dei School in Hampton on Friday 9/18/87 at 7:00PM. It is going to be a swap and trade night. We are cancelling our regular 9/17 meeting in lieu of the joint meeting. We will have maps to help you find the school. Car Pool anyone?

Next month, there will be a sampling of Publishing Partner on these pages....so, until then I leave with a thought, Need output? INPUT! INPUT!

SPECIAL REPORT

By: Kent Irwin

History

Dateline: January 8th, 1987 - the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, Nevada. The new Atari Corporation calls a press conference amid much fanfare and dramatically announces a new Atari PC IBM compatible, a low cost laser printer and a new line of so called Mega ST's.

The Atari PC is said to feature an 8088 microprocessor with socket for 8087 math coprocessor, 4.77 or 8 mhz speeds, CGA, EGA, IBM and Hercules monochrome video modes, one 360K floppy drive, a mouse and detachable XT style keyboard. As an option Atari also announces a new monochrome monitor that will display all the video modes of its PC in black and white and shades of gray. Price of the PC alone is quoted as \$499, packaged with the new monitor - \$699.

The new Atari laser printer is designed to impact the market at a revolutionary price point of about \$1500. This low cost will be achieved by designing the printer to take advantage of the increased memory in the new line of Mega ST computers. Coupled with a 2 or 4 meg Mega ST, it is claimed that the laser printer will meet or exceed the performance of other laser printers costing twice as much.

"We took all our customer's suggestions on how we could improve the

ST, and incorporated them in this series," says Neil Harris, Atari's Director of Marketing Communications, as the new Mega ST series is announced. These new ST's will be marketed as Mega I, Mega II and Mega IV - incorporating one, two and four megabytes of on-board RAM respectively. Features for each include an improved, detachable keyboard with the CPU "box", à la IBM, containing the disk drive as well as the heart of the machine itself. Other improvements announced are open architecture design giving full access to the 68000 bus, a battery backed clock/calendar, on-board blitter graphics coprocessor supported by new TOS ROM's and an expansion slot for future un-named expansions. Availability for the Mega line is said to be "shortly."

In the news release that Mr. Harris posted on various telecommunications services on the night of January 8th, it is also stated that a new style 520ST will be released. It will reportedly be the same in appearance and construction as the present 1040ST's, except with 512K RAM and internal single sided drive in lieu of the 1040's double sided unit. He goes on to state that the original 520ST keyboard/CPU units without monitor or drive will soon be selling for "less than \$300."

For their 8 bit computer market, Atari announces that their 90 column video board and 1200 baud modem, originally scheduled for release in late 1986, will be shipping "soon". A new game system based on the existing

3XE computer is also announced. Rumors of a new 8 bit disk drive circulate without comment from Atari Corp.

Back to the Present!

July 30, 1987: Rumors abound but to date none of the new products announced at CES are shipping out to dealers from Atari with the single exception of the 520STFM (1040 style), which premiered in May. Curiously, I was told by a woman in the Atari sales department the Monday following CES that this new style 520ST would only be a limited edition, with only a few thousand eventually being made available. The original style 520ST would remain. She also laughingly ruled out Neil Harris' quote of "under \$300" pricing for original style 520ST keyboard/CPU units. As I write this, I as a dealer can't buy one for less than \$300. The "limited edition" 520, however, is here to stay!

With the noted exception, all other announced products are in vaporware limbo. This includes the aforementioned products originally scheduled for 4th quarter 1986 release. In preparation for writing this article and in my capacity as an Atari dealer I called Atari Corp. yesterday to get the latest new product information straight from the "horse's mouth." The conversation went something like this:

"I'm calling to inquire into release dates for new products announced at CES, like the Mega ST's and the..."

"All new products will be shipped in late summer", interrupted the lady at

Atari.

"You mean everything, including the...", I tried again before being interrupted again.

"All new products will be shipped in late summer."

It was beginning to sound like a well rehearsed line for inquiries such as mine.

"I don't have any pricing information nor am I taking any orders", she added emphatically.

"Wait a minute", I said. "I'm not calling for pricing or to place an order. I'm just curious as an Atari dealer and I'm getting ready to write a newsletter article on the subject for a local user group."

"Oh", she said. "Well, late summer is all they're telling me on anything right now. They're not giving me any more information than that."

So much for the "horse's mouth." I didn't learn anything that I didn't already know from that conversation.

Reality

According to Neil Harris, the new PC failed its initial FCC type approval submission necessitating the addition of more RF shielding and re-submission for FCC type approval. Reliable sources (more reliable than Neil, but that's another story...) now say it "might" ship by late August. I've also learned since January that only the version of the PC bundled with the new monochrome monitor will offer EGA video output. Because of its low profile construction the PC will not allow the addition of any internal drives or expansion boards. All add-on drives or expansions

will have to be added externally with their own power sources.

At the moment there is no valid excuse being offered by Atari for the delay in shipping the Mega ST's and the laser printer. What's more, Neil Harris now says that, "...it looks like the Mega I has been dropped from the lineup." If true, that will leave only the two and four meg versions of the machines with the present 1040ST remaining as the only one meg ST. Note the fact that I said, "if true." I have my own theory about this but we'll get to that later. Again falling back on normally reliable sources, it's reported that Atari is having problems with the laser printer and does not want to bring the Mega's to market without it because of their stated intent to impact the desktop publishing market with the package. This would seem to make sense when viewed with the fact that third party reports from CES stated that the laser printer shown there by Atari was using a known unreliable Canon engine. They could be trying to iron out problems with the Canon unit or they could be searching for another supplier - something that they do with other product components quite frequently. But, who knows? These are still just rumors, reliable sources or not.

And now for strike three - those products scheduled for release by the end of 1986. Although there has been more than one magazine review of the XEP80 80 column video adaptor for the 8 bit Atari machines that stated, among other things, that, "...it should be on

your dealer's shelf by the time you read this...", I've yet to see one on my shelves nor do I think any have sneaked in while I wasn't looking. Manufacturing delays are said to be to blame. The September issue of Antic claims late delivery of "key microchips" is the culprit.

Antic professes the same excuse for the 1200 baud modem while informed sources (starting to sound like Watergate, ain't it?) say that Atari was forced to negotiate for a new manufacturer after their deal fell through with the first, whoever that was. There have also been nasty rumors floating around that the modem would not be Hayes compatible either. For those of you not familiar with the Hayes standard, it's kind of like the Epson graphics standard among printers. It's important in the fact that most decent tele-communications software supports this standard. If a modem is not Hayes compatible then only software specifically written for that particular modem can be used with it, thereby limiting your choices for telecommunications software. Get the picture? Well, there's a happy ending to this rumor. According to Keith Ledbetter, the author of the ever-popular 1030 and 850 Express! software for 8 bit Atari's, the new modem will not be Hayes compatible only when connected directly to the 8 bit serial chain in the same way as a 1030 or XM301 modem. When connected to an Atari 850 or ICD P;R Connection or an Atari ST the modem will emulate the Hayes standard after all. Since the Hayes standard and software that

supports it are designed to operate through a standard RS232C communications line, it becomes very difficult to make the modem emulate a Hayes when connected via an Atari 8 bit machine's "non-standard" serial port. Hence the two modes of operation. And how does Keith Ledbetter know about it? He's been contracted by Atari to write a new version of Express! for the modem, that's how!

But wait - there's even more to come! Been wondering where all the 1050 disk drives went? Well, it turns out there will be a new 8 bit 5.25" disk drive after all. It will replace the 1050. The only problem is that the new drive isn't ready and Atari is all but out of the 1050's. It seems that all the 1050's that have been shipping to dealers for the past couple of years were all manufactured long ago. Atari has just been selling them off with one in production to replace dwindling stocks. With sales of 1050 disk drives outstripping Atari's projections, they've been caught short. Not wanting to gear up for new production of the same old drive they decided to produce the new one, but not quickly enough to pick up the slack as the remaining 1050's are sold. Consequently, so as not to completely run out of 8 bit drives (gee, wouldn't that look bad?!), they've decided to make you pay dearly for one if you want it bad enough. The dealer price for 1050's has been raised to close to what many stores were retailing them for previously. Worse still, a dealer must now purchase one 130XE computer for each 1050 disk drive that he wants! Now the 130XE is a fine

machine, but the reality of the situation is that no dealer is going to sell as many 130XE's as he does 1050 disk drives. Probably 50-60% of disk drive sales are made to customers buying them as second or even third drives for their one computer. Not too many dealers, myself included, want to wind up with a room full of 130XE's collecting dust just for the priveledge of selling some 1050's. Business is business, after all. But at any rate, the new drives will be double sided, double density units with a new DOS to support them. The new DOS will also support the older drives, reportedly insuring no compatibility problems. These too will be shipping by late summer, so the lady at Atari says. You do believe her, don't you?

THE WRAPUP

As I write this it is being reported that some Mega ST's have started to appear in Europe. Simon Poole, a Swiss ST'er well known to American ST owners as the author of the public domain terminal program, Uniterm, reports that these machines have the promised new TOS ROM's on board but not the blitter graphics coprocessor. Furthermore, he says that the new ROM's are causing some software compatibility problems. Uniterm, for instance, will not run on a Mega ST. This and the absence of the blitter chip bodes no good for us and could account for some of the delay in shipping Mega ST's for the U.S. market. Is Atari having trouble with the blitter after all? If so it's no surprise that they aren't for sale in

this country as the blitter was very definitely promised as an integral part of the new machines, not to mention being an adaptable retro-fit to existing 520 and 1040ST's.

Remember my theory that I mentioned in relation to Neil Harris's announcement that the Mega I had been dropped from the new line, leaving the present 1040ST as the only one meg machine? Well, the theory goes something like this - and remember, it's only my own guess. It could well be that the Mega I will be available after all and that Atari is saying what they're saying in order to get people to buy up existing 1040's. So why would they fib to us like that? Simple. As soon as the Mega line was announced sales of 1040ST's started to decline drastically. Naturally, a lot of folks didn't want to buy the "old" machine when the new one would be shortly introduced. Of course that hurts Atari as well as their dealers because a decline in sales means a decline in revenue. In business one doesn't stay in business if one isn't selling things. In order to boost sales of the 1040's back up it could well be that they decided to say that the Mega I had been dropped with only the more expensive Mega II and IV eventually coming out. This is by no means a new strategy on behalf of a manufacturer. Other computer vendors have done it before and Atari itself did it in January when they told dealers that the re-styled 520ST would only be a limited edition. We now certainly know that was not true. Any number of excuses could be used if and when they ever do decide

to market the Mega I after all. I can hear it now, "...there was such tremendous demand from consumers, that we changed our minds and decided to bring out the Mega I after all!"

Remember now, this is all just the product of my own fertile imagination. But if it turns out to be true in a few months, remember where you heard it! So how do we finally wrap up this seemingly never ending story? First we have to bear in mind that Atari is a for profit corporation that must sell products at a profit in order to survive and grow. So why, with that said, don't they hurry up and ship this stuff so people can buy it and they can make money? Well there's still a piece of the puzzle missing here that we owners of Atari computers often overlook. Atari video games. Yes, that's right, video games. It is reported that Atari is making tremendous profits from their dedicated game machines and being a for profit corporation their primary manufacturing emphasis is going to be on what nets them the most income. With only one manufacturing site in Taiwan it's not difficult to imagine the potential production bottlenecks that could be encountered with trying to bring several new products to market while still cranking out existing money makers. When a bottleneck occurs, you clear it out and concentrate on what you know will sell and make money and worry about the rest later. Profit is and always shall be the very bottom-most of bottom lines. The light at the end of the tunnel is provided by the fact that the "new" Atari

Corporation is staging a comeback and starting to reap some handsome profits under the guidance of the Tramiel dynasty. With this new profitability they should be able to increase their manufacturing presence and start producing a more diversified line of products more in line with announced target dates.

So as the Sun sinks slowly in the west, we can only hope that it will sink somewhere close to Sunnyvale, California, lighting a fire under the leadership at Atari Corp. and getting some of these new products rolling!

Note: The very latest arrival date scoop; Mega II & IV end of August, the new 8bit drive and 1200 modem, September 10 and finally the laser printer on September 15. These are the ship arrival dates.(Ed)

GRAPHICS IN YOUR WORD PROCESSING

A Review of Quik Pix
by Perry Smith

Reprinted from the June 1987 LOCO Express Newsletter. Retyped for Status by RML.

QUIK PIX by White Lion Software is a program that allows you to put print shop graphics into text generated by ATARIWRITER or ATARIWRITER+. It supports Epson or Epson compatible printers. I have a STAR SG10 printer with which it works fine. It will work with one or two drives.

With this program you can generate your own letterheads with or without graphics. The program also has twelve borders that you may select from and place where you want to have them in your letter. You can design your own letterhead and save it on disk. Then when you are ready to type your letter, boot in ATARIWRITER and LOAD the letterhead file. Select the EDIT function. you will see a lot of "jumble", but don't worry, the jumble is your letterhead data. Press SELECT B to go to the end of the letterhead file and type your letter. I have single as well as double columns. When you are finished, print the letter just like any other ATARIWRITER text. You then will see the jumble as your letterhead and border, if you added a border.

The program also allows you to insert graphics anywhere you desire in your text. You may have to do some counting of spaces to get the graphic in the right spot, but it can be done.

With the program you can design your own custom labels with graphics. There are two label functions, one where you can make as many as you like of the same design and the other with OPTION-INSERT or MAIL MERGE.

The program has a Desktop menu screen and has excellent onscreen prompts. One of the menu options is a HELP file that if you forget what to do, you can get instructions. Another option is the DISK/FILE that allows you to view files and free space on a disk, delete files, lock/unlock files and format disks in DOS 2.5 enhanced

density. However the program works fine with disks formatted in single density. You just have to have them already formatted before booting QUIK PIX. The documentation with the program is pretty good.

I wish the program had a provision for enlarging the graphics, but it does not. It would be nice to be able to add larger graphics in text. Overall, I like the program and think it is well worth the money. If you are interested in buying the program, you will probably have to order it from White Lion. I could not find anyone locally that carried the program.

White Lion Software
P.O. Box 357
Ridge, N.Y. 11961
TEL: 516-924-6071
\$29.95 48K DISK

Editor's Note: Quik Pix is available in two versions; Quik Pix PC is for use with PaperClip by Batteries Included and Atariwriter Quik Pix for Atariwriter and Atariwriter Plus. For more detailed information on Quik Pix see the July 1987 issue of *Antic Magazine*.

and XE computers. I had just completed 256K expansions for my 800 and my 800XL. Although difficult and frustrating, both conversions worked and introduced me to the power and speed of ramdisk. The ramdisk really made things faster and easier. However, it also showed the problems with a computer ramdisk. Errant programs were forever locking things up and causing me to reboot. Multi I/O solved the problems. It has its own power supply and maintains its memory even when the computer is off. Programs that crash an XL or 800+ don't affect the Multi I/O at all. It takes more than an errant poke to upset it.

The Multi I/O also takes the place of several other attachments. It includes a Centronics compatible printer port, an RS-232 port for modems or printers, a video port for a forthcoming 80 column card, and THE high tech enhancement- a SCSI hard disk interface. In addition, it holds either 256K or 1meg of memory for a ramdisk/printer buffer. All in all, a very cost-effective little box, even at the list price of \$199.95 for the 256K model. Just add it up- \$40-50 for a ram expansion, \$60-80 for a printer buffer, \$50-100 for a 850 interface, or ICD's P:R Connection, and at least \$80-100 for a hard disk interface, if you can ever find one.

The Multi I/O is a light grey box virtually the same size as an 850 interface...about 1 X 7 X 9 in. It comes with a 9 volt AC power supply and on top is a silk-screen of the ICD and Multi I/O logo. A six inch ribbon cable

and connector come out the front and plugs directly into the back bus on the 800XL. The 130XE requires an adapter that plugs into the cartridge slot and extender. The adapter has two cartridge slots in it, one for a regular cartridge and one for their R-Time battery backed clock. Hookup is simply a matter of plugging in the computer connector and the power supply. Even I could do it.

Near the left hand edge on the top are two LEDs. One green (power on) and one red for when the MIO is active. Along the left hand end are the power jack, the on/off switch, the RS-232 port, and the video port. The video port is there, but the card to run it hasn't been released yet. On the right hand end are a standard Atari DB-15 printer port, and the fifty pin SCSI socket.

STATUS EDITOR'S NOTE: ICD is now advertising the "Optional 80 Column Adapter" is available for \$99.95.

The unit works as advertised. I've had it on continuously for about a week with no problems. The RS-232 port works a modem just like the 850 did. I just unplugged it from one and stuck it into the MIO. The printer port works just like the ICD P;R:Connection. I had been using a printer hooked to the Atari serial port, so I didn't have a long enough cable for the MIO. I did have a short cable that plugged in and confirmed that the printer printed like it was supposed to.

ICD's MIO apparently has a few minor inconsistencies with the 850, but

nothing has bothered me, nor have I heard any complaints about it. Lacking a hard drive I have not tried the SCSI interface. I have talked to several BBS's that are running hard disks off the MIO with no problems, so any problems should be traceable to a hardware defect and repairable.

ICD includes a copy of SpartaDOS to run the MIO. Necessary since few people could do anything with the MIO otherwise. It isn't a complete DOS, but it does recognize the ramdisk and hard disk, and can access files on any Atari format disk. SpartaDOS uses a lot of extrinsic commands loading them in from the disk when needed, thereby freeing up memory for other uses. Common commands like Rename, Copy, Erase, DIRectory, and others are in the memory all the time. It works like MS-DOS making it familiar to IBM users. The best feature is that all of SpartaDOS can be copied to the MIO ramdisk to speed up operation.

The MIO can be addressed directly at anytime by pressing the Select and Reset buttons (holding both down while the reset occurs). This brings up the MIO menu. Be careful not to accidentally do this as it erases whatever is in the computer's memory. The configuration menu lets the operator control all the MIO functions. Up to 8 drives are recognized and can be switched around at will. This lets the computer boot from the ramdisk. It takes all of an eyeblink. I made up a boot disk with SpartaDOS that contains all my frequently used programs. After initializing the ramdisk with

SpartaDOS, I copy all the programs to it. Two keystrokes switch the ramdisk with drive 1. Then when the computer is turned on, it boots from the M10 in less than a second. SpartaDOS also has a RD.COM file that can be used to setup the computer memory ramdisk if desired for use in programming.

The setup menu also controls the printer spooler. This handy device holds text to be printed until the printer gets to it. No more waiting around for a long letter or article like this to print out. The buffer has a number of features: a Pause between documents, Repeat for multiple copies, and line feeds if your printer needs them. Both the serial or parallel ports are supported. P1: is the M10, P2: is the Atari serial port. None eliminates the buffer entirely. The Atari serial port doesn't have a buffer though. I guess that was too tricky even for ICD to do.

The RS-232 port is also easy to configure. You can easily set baud rate up to 19,200, parity, stop bits, and either R: or P: depending on whether you want another printer, or a modem.

Finally, you can set up for your hard disks. Each drive in the configuration menu can be up to 16 meg, either as a physically separate drive, or as a partition on a larger drive. Just hook up your 60 megabyte Priam ID60 and go. Kind of ridiculous, since 10 meg will probably hold every 8-bit program ever published.

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3 TONITE 7:30PM	4
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
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STATUS MEETINGS SEPTEMBER 1987

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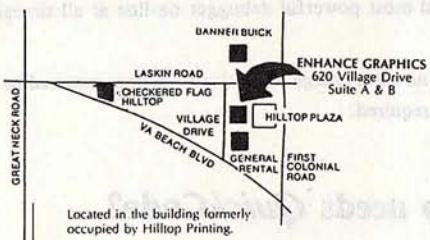
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Meetings: STATUS meetings are held on the first and third Thursdays of the month at the 7-UP Bottling Company, 5700 Ward Avenue, in Virginia Beach at 7:30 p.m. All interested parties are welcome to attend.

Newsletter Articles:

Submitted articles are preferred as disk text files, but will be greatly accepted as hard copy (including handwriting) if you do not have a disk drive. If you have a modem, you can upload your articles to the Editor by calling the STATUS BBS at 468-1096. Articles may be submitted at any time, but will probably not make that month's Newsletter if submitted less than one week prior to the first meeting of the month.

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